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BULB CONFERENCE--INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

Steps Leading to the Conference.

This is the third public conference called by the Department for the consideration of the bulb subject--the fourth if the original hearing of 1918, which was the basis of Quarantine 37, is included. In view of the belief which is occasionally expressed that the Department has given no opportunity for a public consideration of this subject, it seems desirable to make a brief historical statement of the various steps leading to the present conference.

Following the hearing of 1918, six classes of bulbs were presented to the Board by the Bureau of Plant Industry of the Department as properly open to unlimited entry, and in the regulations under Quarantine 37, as later issued, provision was made for such entry of these bulbs. The belief of the Department at that time was that these bulbs could properly be considered with field and vegetable seeds, as being substantially free from risk. These six classes covered upwards of 90 per cent of the bulbs which had previously been imported. The other classes of bulbs, restricted at that time as to entry to certain essential horticultural needs, included both bulbs from countries where little was known of pest conditions, and also such bulbs as were believed to be either then adequately produced in the United States or capable of shortly being so produced, so that there was no horticultural necessity operating as an offset against the termination of the risk which their entry in large volume might entail.

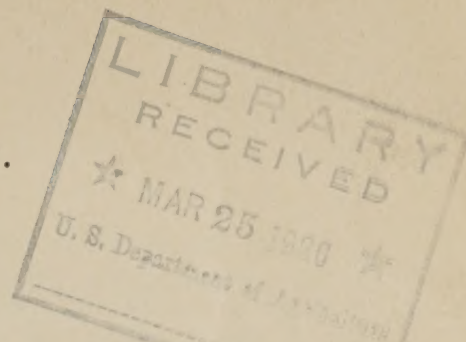
That this limitation to six classes of bulbs was open to reasonable question as too drastic came to be felt by the Board very shortly after the promulgation of the quarantine and was clearly indicated by its Chairman in an address given, in August, 1919, before the Society of American Florists and Ornamental Horticulturists at its annual session of that year in Detroit. At that time he stated:

We are perfectly willing to correct anything in the quarantine that is unnecessary, and the bulb matter may be one of those.

We will be glad to have your bulb men come in committee or conference at any time to Washington. We would like to go over the whole subject of bulbs because if there is any weak spot in the quarantine it is in the matter of bulbs.

No action looking to such conference by persons interested in the enlargement of the provisions for bulb importations was taken as a result of this announcement.

In May and June, 1921, delegations of Belgian and Dutch horticulturists discussed with the Board the bulb restrictions and were advised that a public conference on that subject would probably be called at some future date. After a number of conferences on the subject with the specialists of the Bureau of Plant Industry, the Board issued a call for the conference, which was held May 15, 1922,



but, in view of many requests, opened for discussion the whole subject of plant importation under Regulation 3. The purpose, therefore, of that conference, as indicated in the public announcements, was to give opportunity for full consideration of the possibility of any modifications--additions to or deductions from--of the classes of plants, including bulbs, permitted unlimited importation under Regulation 3 of Quarantine 37. The agricultural and horticultural and forestry interests of the United States were well represented at that conference which had also a large foreign representation, and was therefore in a sense international. It was opened and presided over, so far as his time permitted, by Secretary Wallace. The discussions covered such a wide range and occupied so much time (two days) that at the request of persons in interest it was agreed to postpone the consideration of the special bulb subject for a later conference, and such conference was held October 30, 1922.

As was clearly stated in the call for this bulb conference, its object was to give consideration to the status of the six classes of bulbs open to unlimited importation and to any changes that could be properly made in that list. It was certainly the Board's expectation both at the time of calling the May conference and the later special bulb conference that the result would be considerable additions to the bulbs open to unlimited entry. The facts of pest risk, however, presented at the special bulb conference by the Department specialists of the Bureaus of Plant Industry and Entomology were of such a nature and so strongly insisted upon as to lead to a limitation of such extensions to some eight additional bulbs and for a three-year period only, and to a restriction on the entry of Narcissus bulbs to become effective also after three years, such effective period both for the bulbs added to the list and for Narcissus to be January 1, 1926.*

The six classes of bulbs which had been open to unlimited entry under Regulation 3 are:

- Lilium (lily)
- Convallaria (lily-of-the-valley)
- Narcissus (jonquil, daffodil, etc.)
- Hyacinthus (hyacinth)
- Tulipa (tulip)
- Crocus.

The bulbs added for a three-year period are:

- Chionodoxa (glory-of-the-snow)
- Galanthus (snowdrop)
- Scilla (squill)
- Fritillaria imperialis (crown imperial)
- Fritillaria meleagris (guineahen-flower)
- Muscari (grape hyacinth)
- Ixia
- Eranthis (winter aconite).

*That the action then taken is open to valid criticism on account of the deferment of the restrictions authorized may be admitted--deferment to avoid the losses to our own importers on the basis of existing contracts, as well as to foreign growers of the bulbs. The action may be criticised also on account of its incompleteness, now more clearly known than at that time; namely, that at least one other bulb, the Hyacinth, open to unlimited entry, is fully as subject to infestation with the eelworm as is the Narcissus.

The Basis for the Present Reconsideration.

The action, restricting the entry of Narcissus bulbs, taken by the Department following the bulb conference of October 30, 1922, was undoubtedly fully justified by the information then available and presented with respect to pest entry with these bulbs. The information subsequently obtained has merely emphasized the menace then indicated from bulb pests, not only to bulb cultures but to important farm crops. Further, it is evident from the inspections made at ports of entry of imported bulbs since 1922 that the amount of infestation has increased rather than diminished as to such important pests as the two bulb flies, the bulb eelworm, and the bulb mite.

In view of this situation, the only basis for a reconsideration of the restrictions authorized in 1922, or for objection to the extension of that action to the Hyacinth, for example, must be information which clearly indicates that the establishment of these bulb pests in the United States is now so widespread and so impossible of control by any reasonable means that the constant reinfestation from bulk importations will not greatly aggravate the situation--in other words, that the opportunity for protection from these pests has passed--and this is the only phase of the argument against the action of 1922 which has any real force. Secretary Jardine's purpose, therefore, in authorizing a detailed review of the bulb subject during this year, both with respect to the actual pest entry with bulb imports, and to the extent to which such pests may already have obtained foothold in the United States, was to develop the actual facts as they exist today as a basis for the decision as to the necessity for any modification, or for the reversal, of the action of 1922.

The facts of establishment and possibility of control of such bulb pests are, in brief, the phases of the bulb situation which have direct bearing on the validity of the restrictions, and which are necessary now to be determined. Based on such determination, the Department hopes and expects, with an open mind, to make a fair and correct decision.

That you may have the benefit of the Department's investigation both with respect to the actual infestation of the imported bulbs and the present status of establishment of imported bulb pests in the United States, the Department will present briefly at this conference the results of its investigations of these subjects.

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